

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 16173 111609Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6464

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, EEC, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH PRESS REACTION TO THE EC SUMMIT

1. THE BRITISH PRESS PORTRAYED THE EC SUMMIT AS A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY FOR THE UK. HEADLINES RANGED FROM "NEW IMPETUS FOR RENEGOTIATIONS" (FINANCIAL TIMES) TO "GICARD BOWS TO WILSON" (TELEGRAPH) AND "BRITAIN GETS A CUT-PRICE MARKET DEAL" (DAILY EXPRESS).

2. PRIME MINISTER WILSON WAS MORE CAUTIOUS IN HIS OWN COMMENTS TO THE PRESS AFTER THE MEETING. PROGRESS WAS MADE, HE SAID, BUT THERE IS STILL "A VERY LONG WAY TO GO" AND THE ISSUE IS STILL "VERY MUCH IN DOUBT."

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PAGE 02 LONDON 16173 111609Z

IN A BBC INTERVIEW, FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN SAID

THAT THE UK HAD SUCCESSFULLY CLEARED THE SUMMIT HURDLE, BUT DIFFICULT ONES STILL LAY AHEAD. THE COMMUNITY'S DECISION ON THE BUDGET, HOWEVER, MEANT THAT THE UK WAS STILL "ON TARGET" IN THE RENEGOTIATION TIMETABLE. HE SAID THAT A DECISION ON HOW TO CONSULT THE PEOPLE ON THE RESULTS OF RENEGOTIATION WOULD PROBABLY BE MADE IN LATE JANUARY.

3. AN EDITORIAL IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES CALLED THE SUMMIT A "QUALIFIED SUCCESS." NO MEMBER STATE SECURED EVERYTHING IT WANTED, BUT MORE TANGIBLE PROGRESS WAS MADE THAN AT PREVIOUS EC SUMMITS. A "MAJOR GESTURE" HAS BEEN MADE ON THE SIZE OF THE BRITISH BUDGET CONTRIBUTION -- THE MAIN POINT IN EC RENEGOTIATION. THE BRITISH PEOPLE THE "SOLID ADVANTAGES OF MEMBERSHIP."

4. THE PRESS TOOK THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GISCARD AND WILSON AS THE SUMMIT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT. AS THE DAILY EXPRESS PUT IT, THE TWO LEADERS "WERE CHIEFLY SHADOW BOXING TO IMPRESS THEIR OWN ELECTORATES." THE FINANCIAL TIMES SAID: WILSON "CLEARLY DECIDED THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO MAKE A WELL-PUBLICIZED SHOW OF BRITISH TOUGHNESS. HIS AIM APPEARED TO BE TO COUNTER ANY IMPRESSION HE MAY HAVE GIVEN IN THE PAST FEW DAYS THAT HE IS GOING OUT OF HIS WAY TO PLEASE OTHER EEC GOVERNMENTS."

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